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ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION

BY F. S. LAMB

THE Third Annual Exhibition set forth by the National Society of Craftsmen in the National Arts Club, New York, in December, was by far the most interesting that has been held. Not only did it reach a higher standard than heretofore, but contain several works of greater distinction.

The tapestry from the looms of the talented artist, Albert Herter, was a most remarkable achievement. The hangings prepared for the mansion of E. H. Harriman at Arden, a work of such magnitude as to have daunted any but the most courageous craftsman; and the result achieved rivaled the best tapestries of the olden days. Mr. Herter, in design, retained the medieval feeling, while in detail he introduced naturalistic notes in the shape of flowers, vines, and trees, germane to the flora of that region. The figures, while somewhat archaic, symbolized the spirits of the trees, and the general result, at first glance, reminded one of the finer tapestries of the Musée Cluny or the South Kensington. It was, however, in the color effects that the greatest victory was achieved. No one not an expert could appreciate the difficulty of even approaching the soft tones of the older tapestry, and yet in this work fresh from the loom, and incomplete in certain details, there was a charm and harmony of color impossible to describe. It goes without saying that the most modern methods were employed. Mr. Herter has made a most careful study of dyes with the result that he confines himself to mineral dyes exclusively. His work is probably one of the most marked examples of the rapidity with which the craftsman meets, grasps, and solves the most difficult problem.

Mr. Herter was as well represented by rugs and portières, simpler perhaps in design and execution, but equally able in the decorative results obtained. These tapestries were exhibited in the same room with some examples of Gobelin,

loaned by Mr. Henry C. Lawrence, and did not suffer by comparison.

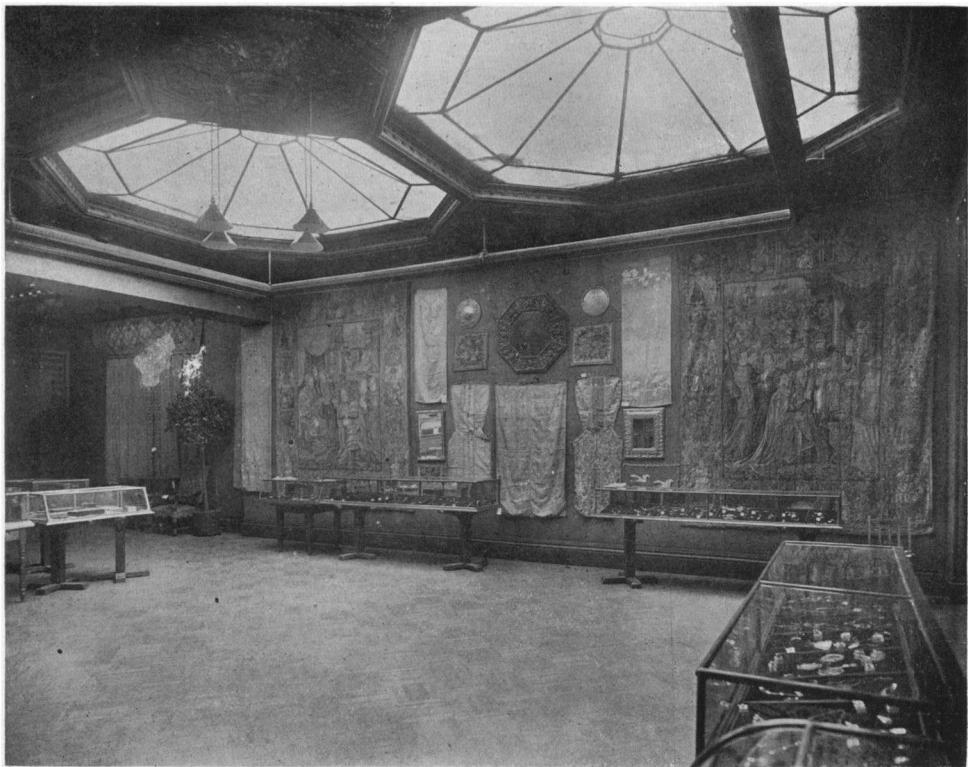
The exhibition contained a most interesting example of wood-carving from the studio of Karl Rydingsvaard, which was one of a series of panels purposed for the interior decoration of a yacht. Vigorous in design and execution, his treatment of the material showed the best methods of the wood-carver. It is not until one sees a piece of work of this ability that it is possible to realize what might be done were this art more carefully studied and better understood.

The jewelry, as usual, formed an important section of the exhibit, and it was interesting to note that this year the design in the work of all the jewelers tended to sanity. The idiosyncrasies of the so-called *la nouveau* movement were not so keenly felt and the results obtained were the earnest of a new and perhaps more conservative school of work than has yet been approached in the United States. It was also interesting to note that much of the best work was from the hands of the younger and comparatively unknown craftsmen.

Perhaps equally interesting was the small but beautiful exhibit of sgraffito work by Miss Elizabeth Mosenthal, wherein was retained the charm of medieval work without the eccentricities of execution which, when used by the modern worker, often become mannerisms.

The potters again sustained their reputation for being the most advanced craftsmen. Their work had an air of completeness which was lacking in many of the other departments. The pottery exhibits were numerous, and while the general tonality as a whole verged upon the green, still there were exhibits, as in the case of the Volkmar pottery, where the deepest and richest color was obtained, without being a glaring or discordant note.

Some of the titles of the Grueby exhibit indicated the possibilities of the



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decorative use of the color in this medium, and while small in scale, they yet suggested the possibility of great mural decorations.

The Rookwood Pottery was even above its usual standard, and while many may prefer the more vigorous treatment of other pottery, still there was a poetic charm in many of the Rookwood exhibits which fascinated the true lover of the beautiful. Misses Penman and Hardenbert exhibited a number of their hand-built pieces, interesting in form, color, and texture, which were, in fact, among the most individual of the exhibits.

Mr. Baggs had some unusually fine examples, and a new note in pottery was struck by Miss Brown of the Bowl Shop of Boston, in a number of simple pieces for table use, artistic both in design and execution.

The porcelains were not numerous, but were made notable by the admirable work

of the Misses Mason. These talented sisters have achieved, in a medium more or less refractory, a distinction of design and color seldom obtained.

Very interesting exhibits in tooled and colored leather were shown. In Miss Hibler's work novel effects were obtained by a new process of working dyes into the leather. Mrs. Shope's work was distinctive in the use of gold leaf as well as the colored dyes.

It is perhaps the most difficult task to justly appraise the textile exhibit, because of its great variety. This department, more than any other, showed the transition from the old to the new. There were specimens of work that manifested the influence of the earlier training in embroidery and needlework, which obtained in this country some years ago. There were the usual examples of stenciled work, but a number were treated with a firmness of design and simplicity of ex-



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ecution which marked them for approval. It is also to be noted that there was a more intelligent understanding of the relation of the scale of the design to the purpose of the textile evident than had yet been demonstrated in these exhibitions.

The department of bookbinding and illumination deserves special praise—the book craft workers showing the result of thorough organization and most earnest study, some of the binding and illumination on parchment reaching a distinction notable for this country. It is surprising that work possessing such artistic merit is as yet so slightly appreciated.

There were of course numerous exhibits in metal and some interesting experiments in translucent glass.

The scheme of the exhibition was greatly aided by numerous loans which had been solicited in order not only to

brighten the exhibition, but to serve as examples of craftsmanship to the members of the Society and exhibitors. Among these was a most interesting collection of Mexican saltillo blankets, loaned by Cora B. Myers.

Not the least important feature of the exhibition was its general effect and the impression produced by it upon the visitor—the exhibits, while grouped in their various classifications, being so judiciously placed as to permit, in connection with the loans and a few notes of decoration, a most pleasing scheme of color. When one realizes the small scale of many of the handicraft exhibits one can fully appreciate the difficulty of this problem. It was hard to believe that over fifteen hundred exhibits had been deftly placed in this collection, for the exhibition as a whole impressed the most casual visitor with its simplicity and dignity.